



Meet Our New Director

By Melanie Allen, Community Outreach Coordinator

John Williams is the new Director of the Hamilton County Board of Elections. Prior to coming to the Board, John's career was very diverse.

A former Hamilton County Prosecutor, who worked for Mike Allen, he managed the Intake Division of the prosecutors office. There he reviewed thousands of criminal cases for presentation to the Grand Jury.

John grew up on the west side and attended St. Xavier High School and Xavier University. After graduating from college he worked in medical sales. Moving east, John next owned and operated Al's Famous Pony

Keg in Oakley, an experience he called a "real education." "After five years, I realized that I was catering to every vice – smoking, drinking and lottery."

He sold the pony keg and moved north to attend Thomas Cooley Law School in Lansing Michigan. Upon graduation, he was hired by the Prosecutors Office and worked there for 10 years.

"John is a good man who possesses great management skills," said former boss Mike Allen. Mr. Allen added, "His ability to function, manage and lead others in high stress situations will be well suited for the Board of Elections."

The BOE will be making significant



John Williams, Director

changes in the way it provides election services to the public under John's watch.

John said "his goals are to shepherd the BOE into the new era of electronic voting and most importantly to maintain the highest standards possible in running Hamilton County elections."

John and his wife Sarah have three boys, Jack 5, George Riley 2, and Drew 1 month. They live in Anderson Township.

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Primary Objectives:

- To provide for fair and efficient elections throughout Hamilton County and to fairly and equitably enforce all rules, regulations and laws that apply to elections.
- To inform and educate Hamilton County residents regarding the election procedures and processes that govern and operate elections.

March 2004 Primary Election Results

By Pamela M. Swafford, Deputy Director

Unofficial election results show that of the 500,884 registered voters in Hamilton County only 140,348 (28.02%) chose to vote on Election Day, March 2nd.

Although voter turnout was low, the Board was busy assisting voters with questions regarding where to vote, switching parties, and change of name and/or address.

Primary Elections are held to allow voters to nominate candi-

dates who will represent political party in the November General Election. That voters had to request a Democrat or Republican ballot to vote for candidates at the polls.

Voters could also request a Issues Only Ballot. These voters are called Independents. Only candidates running for the offices of State or County Central Committee of the two major political parties (Democrat or Republican) were elected at the Primary. We have 1013 precincts in Hamilton County. There may be

party member elected from each of these precincts to County Central Committee for each party.

The officials who elect members of the Democratic and Republican Parties for the

next two years. State Central Committee persons elect their party leaders at the State level for two years. The candidates who were nominated at the Primary will be on the November ballot. For specific ward and precinct results visit our website at www.hamilton-co.org/results.

New Citizen—Naturalization Program

Patricia Phelan, Naturalization Program Director

I*...do hereby declare on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state or sovereignty...and that I take this obligation freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; so help me God."*

With this oath, approximately 60 to 80 people become citizens each month in the Cincinnati area. They have gone through months of study, filling out forms, paying fees, interviews and tests, and now the day has arrived.

The new citizens come from all over the world, representing all races and creeds, all economic and educational backgrounds. The one thing they have in com-

mon—they have chosen to become citizens of the United States.

Naturalization ceremonies are held every month in the Cincinnati area. Most of the time, the ceremony is held at the Potter Stewart Courthouse in downtown Cincinnati. However, three or four times a year, the ceremony is held at different schools in the Hamilton County area. This is to provide 7th and 8th graders an opportunity to witness the naturalization ceremony as part of the civics curriculum. Occasionally, classes of schoolchildren attend the ceremonies at the Courthouse.

Representatives from the Board of Elections attend the ceremonies to help the new citizens reg-

ister to vote.

About half of the new citizens register to vote at that time. But each citizen receives a registration application that can be mailed to the Board of Elections.

In Hamilton County, in the last Presidential Election, 75% of those naturalized citizens who registered, voted. The percentage of all registered voters in Hamilton County who voted in that year was 65%.

There is a great deal of pride and patriotism as well as eagerness to participate in the American process among these new citizens.

Each ceremony ends with: *"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America ..."*

Voters Respond Favorably to HAVA

By Diane Goldsmith, Voter Registration Dept. Administrator

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) made its first impact on Hamilton County voters during the recent March 2004 Primary Election. Many voters responded well to the new HAVA voter registration regulations that went into effect January 1, 2003.

HAVA requires first time voters in Ohio, who registered by mail and did not provide their driver's license number or the last four digits of their Social Security

Number or some other prescribed form of identification, to provide ID when voting for the first time after January 1, 2004. Prior to the March 2004 Primary, letters were mailed to voters who were not in compliance with the new HAVA voter registration regulations.

The communication was sent to ask affected voters to provide the Board of Elections with the required identification before the election and avoid having to provide ID on Election Day. The results of this effort met with

great success as a majority did respond. Prior to the November 2004 General Election the Registration Department will again contact voters who have not provided the required identification.

If you are a voter who registered by mail in 2003 or 2004 and wish to know if you are in compliance with HAVA regulations, call 632-7034, 632-7047 or 632-7055. To understand the basics of the HAVA legislation visit the Secretary of State website at www.sos.state.oh.us/sos/hava/basics.

Electronic Voting Update

By Melanie Allen, Community Outreach and Joe Mallory, Elections Administrator

Electronic voting is coming, but when is the question most people are asking. The answer is soon. Plans were to have electronic voting in place for the 2004 Presidential Election. But because there are a lot of issues regarding the electronic voting technology, the new voting system will not be used in the upcoming election.

However, the system used in Hamilton County for the past 30 years will be replaced in the near future. The days of punch cards and chads will soon be history. They will be replaced by a memory card and computer chip. Hamilton County voters will soon be using a DRE (*Direct Recording Electronic*) system to

cast and count their votes for candidates and issues.

Hamilton County delayed choosing a DRE system from vendors certified by the Secretary of State because of increased concerns raised about the reliability of the equipment and the technology used to operate the new systems.

To facilitate the move toward electronic voting, the Secretary of State selected a system created by HartIntercivic called the *eSlate* for Hamilton County. Although the *eSlate* will not be used in the 2004 Presidential Election, Hamilton County residents and voters will have opportunities to see how the new system works. Our Community Outreach staff will be exhibiting

the *eSlate* throughout the community at festivals, expos, community council and civic group meetings, churches, businesses, colleges and universities.

A primary goal of our outreach efforts will be to acquaint the community to the new equipment before introducing it in an election. Throughout this exhibition process, the Board will continue to pursue due diligence in examining the potential for DRE equipment defects and software security issues.

The Board will do all it can to ensure the new technology is reliable and protects the confidentiality and integrity of the entire voting process so that Hamilton County can continue to be a forerunner in providing fair, accurate and efficient elections.

Voter Info Tip:

You can check our website to find where DRE systems will be on exhibit.

HAMILTON COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS

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"Promoting Voting"

We're On The Web !

www.hamilton-co.org/boe

"Voters of the Future" Project

By Melanie Allen, Community Outreach Coordinator

Congratulations to the students of the Hughes Center's TaGena Wallace, Nominators, along with more than 300 Juniors and Seniors who were eligible to vote in the March 2 Primary Election and will be able to vote in the upcoming November General Election. Some also worked as Poll Workers during the March Primary Election.

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The Board of Elections Community Outreach staff provided voter registration and voting procedures training to chapter officers who in turn trained teachers and other student volunteers to conduct voter registration and "how-to-vote" demonstrations. The officers also conducted a mock election which gave students an opportunity to have a hands-on simulated voting experience.

In a speech given to the Urban League's Scholarship Committee, TaGena expressed that she and her colleagues are "pleased that Hughes Center students will be well equipped with voting skills when they go to the polls to vote in the future."

National Honor Society *Voter of the Future* elected by officers of the National Honor Society. Chapter and Project Coordinators, registered more than 300 Juniors and Seniors were eligible to vote in the March 2 Primary Election and will be able to vote in the upcoming November General Election. Some also worked as Poll Workers during the March Primary Election.

Restoring the Voting Rights of Convicted Felons

By Joseph Mallory, Election Supplies Dept. Administrator

Can convicted felons vote? This question is being asked more frequently. The simple answer is YES...as long as they are not incarcerated and get registered to vote.

One of the biggest misconceptions or myths is that once you have been convicted of a felony you may no longer vote. The truth is - once you are convicted of a felony and are incarcerated in a correctional facility, you lose your voting rights. You then become what is known as disenfranchised which means you lose your right to vote.

The following examples list a

few situations some could be faced with if convicted of a felony, and how it affects their voting rights:

A) If you are convicted of a felony and receive a sentence whereby you are incarcerated in a correctional facility, you lose your voting rights until you are released on parole or probation and register or re-register to vote.

B) If you have been convicted of a felony and receive a sentence and placed on probation you do not lose your voting rights because you are not incarcerated.

C) If you are confined in a jail or workhouse under sentence for a

misdemeanor, or awaiting trial for a misdemeanor or a felony, you may request an absentee ballot if you will be incarcerated on Election Day. The key is - you are still awaiting trial and have not been convicted of a felony.

Each state has different regulations in place. Some prohibit convicted felons from voting while on parole, in others you could be disenfranchised for up to 5 years.

There are several states which disenfranchise a convicted felon for life. Ohio does allow convicted felons to vote if on parole or probation. As long as you register or re-register to vote you are re-enfranchised.